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Voice of RIAS Cracks Iron Curtain

East Germany Hears the Truth

CPYRGHT

By PIERRE J. HUSS

THE "Voice of America" and "Radio Free Europe" are doing yeoman work in penetrating the Iron Curtain with broadcasts aimed at keeping the peoples in captive lands aware of life in free nations and exposing to them the false Communist propaganda forced down their throats by Moscow.

Somewhat overlooked is the equally effective work of RIAS, the American-supported broadcasting outfit devoted exclusively to bringing to the Soviet-dominated East Germans a daily and nightly slice of life as it is lived in West Germany.

I spent several hours recently touring the Berlin Operational Headquarters of RIAS, where the U. S. Government spends an annual \$84,000,000 to give East Germans not only a picture of democracy at work in Berlin and on the Rhine but strives by all available means to tear the mask off the East German Communist regime and bring home to every one of the 17,000,000 East Germans that they are being used as pawns by the Soviet Union in a game of high-powered political blackmail.

There is nothing pretentious in the pre-war offices housing this psychological warfare weapon against Communist operations in East Berlin and East Germany. But I saw the efficiency and fervor with which the six Americans in charge and the 500 German employees carry out their job. I had the pleasure of running into Deputy Director Robert Lochner, son of Louis P. Lochner, long-time Berlin correspondent for the Associated Press.

Young Lochner told me that some critics have voiced the complaint that the only efforts to counter Soviet propaganda and control in East Germany have come from RIAS, thus leaving this important task on American shoulders. The Bonn government finally has seen fit, Lochner revealed, to set aside funds for organizing and operating "Deutschland Funk," which will stress to the East Germans that they are listening to an entirely German-originated program.

Lochner explained that the German broadcasting operations will neither duplicate nor compete with RIAS. There is plenty of room for all such efforts to counter the Soviet activity in East Germany.

"We have found," Lochner said, "that in conducting our broadcasting operations, RIAS is most effective when it tells both the good and the bad side of the West German picture and of democracy in general. Thus the other day there was a scandal in Bonn relating to corruption charged against a lead-



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ing government official. We carefully gave the East Germans the whole truth, and in that way offset the sensational onslaught of distorted allegations given the East Germans by Communist broadcasts and newspapers.

"On the other hand, the German project will be able to cover some fields of German life and activity in the West which make it more difficult for the Communist machine to refute, since Germans, East or West, don't like to be told that they are born liars. The East Germans who may figure that RIAS sells the news and commentaries with some favoritism for our side will accept at face value more easily that which they hear from their own blood brothers."

RIAS broadcasts day and night not only news from the West but exploits events and incidents harvested from its many volunteer contacts in East Germany. Thus, the East German puppet regime some two weeks ago accused RIAS of inventing a report that East Germans in one area were queuing up for potatoes and other food scarcities. RIAS replied by citing the facts as checked and doublechecked after a clipping was sent to it by an anonymous East German, who took it from the pages of his obscure weekly newspaper.

Lochner showed me estimates compiled through extensive soundings which make it pretty certain that 75 per cent of the East Germans listen to RIAS.

An interesting development in recent years has been the fact that at least 1,000 East Germans a year venture into personally visiting RIAS, where they are made welcome and given answers to all questions. Another 1,000 telephone their appreciation, an operation for which they have to cross over into West Berlin since there is no telephonic communication between the sectors of the split city.

All in all, it was good to see this American psychological weapon at work against the ever-busy Communist propagandists.

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